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NOVEMBER 11-12, 1960.

BY- HOUSEHOLDER, FRED S. SAPORTA, SOL
INDIANA UNIV., BLOOMINGTON

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DISCUSSION TOPICS AND CONFEREES OPINIONS OF A
LEXICOGRAPHY CONFERENCE HELD AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY UNDER THE
AUSPICES OF THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION IN 1960 ARE BRIEFLY
SUMMARIZED IN THIS DOCUMENT. THE REPORT IS ONE OF A SERIES OF
13 PAPERS RESULTING FROM THE CONFERENCE. (JH)

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Report on the Lexicography Conference

Held under the auspices of the Office of Education

at Indiana University, November 11-12, 1960 *Kale*

Introduction to Report on the Lexicography Conference

The short work conference has become a well-established and apparently fruitful part of academic scholarship. It brings together anywhere from five to fifty persons, usually representing a variety of approaches and interests, who spend two or three days attacking a set of related problems and only rarely one another. A grant from the Office of Education made possible such a Conference on Lexicography, held at Indiana University on November 11-12, 1960. A total of 17 papers were solicited and distributed beforehand. They were presented in summary form in four sessions, to each of which was assigned a formal discussant. The papers and discussions form the body of this report. The agenda and list of participants are added as appendices.

I. There were several points on which the conferees expressed unanimity or very general agreement.

(1) Dictionaries should be designed with a special set of users in mind and for their specific needs. E.g., an English-Arabic dictionary for American users for help in speaking Arabic, or a Thai-English dictionary for British and American users for help in reading Thai, etc. The point was also made that for languages where no good dictionary of any kind is available, it might be better for the first dictionary produced to be as general-purpose as possible, usable by speakers of both languages for reading, writing or speaking. But this was conceded to be a counsel of perfection.

(2) All entries should be as accessible as possible; irregular forms should either have a full entry (if possible), or at least a cross-reference to the main article. Idioms should be listed under each of their constituents, if

possible. It was generally agreed that however scientific it might be to group all etymologically related words together, students derive no commensurate benefit from the hours of time wasted in hunting down words not in their obvious alphabetical place. The one or two dissenters argued for the mnemonic value of associating related words in learning.

(3) Essential syntactic information should be included with each item-- facts about kinds of objects, prepositional phrases, subjects, concord, etc. If, as about half the conferees recommended, a brief grammatical sketch is included as part of the dictionary, it could be used to provide and explain convenient symbols for conveying syntactic information. In some cases syntactic information should also serve the secondary purpose of meaning discrimination. Similar semantic information could be conveyed through indications of typical or normal collocations--e.g. favorite objects, subjects, etc., even where not grammatically inevitable. Two conferees suggested the advisability of giving syntactic information in the gloss: "opens it" for a transitive, "it opens" for an intransitive verb, for instance, and two others recommended the use of capital letters or similar symbols in expressions like "X gives Y to Z".

(4) Where there are distinct levels of usage (polite, literary, colloquial, vulgar, not among women, etc.), these should be carefully labeled, if possible. This applies also to dialect variation, diglossia, and similar situations.

(5) Thorough investigation of semantic structure is desirable, and where we have already sufficient knowledge to indicate relationships of incompatibility, hyponymy, synonymy, etc., this should be done in the most economical way possible. But more research in this whole area is much needed. Weinreich argued for actual field work on semantics in the preparation of every dictionary.

II. The points upon which there appeared to be some clear disagreement were chiefly minor ones.

(1) The principle of form-class equivalence, that glosses should be perfect and complete translations in respect to grammatical class, though agreed to by most of the conferees, was considered unnecessary by Weinreich if the correct form-class is indicated in some other way.

(2) Few of the conferees expressed a view on the proper size of a dictionary, but those who did varied between 10,000 entries (Harrell and Swanson) and 50,000 or more (Haas, Barnhart and Tietze). The smaller size is perhaps correlated with a special purpose (conversational expression); certainly the larger size is necessary for reading.

(3) The question of the inclusion or omission of extremely common words in common senses elicited two divergent views: Barnhart favored omitting them, on the ground that anyone qualified to use the dictionary at all would know them, while Swanson argued for including them, on the ground that it is impossible to predict what a user may not know.

(4) The use of technical Latin nomenclature in defining plant-names and animal names was favored by Ianucci but opposed by Conklin and Weinreich, for different reasons: Conklin felt it was not sufficient, Weinreich that it was not necessary or true to the status of natural languages.

(5) Mary Haas argued for the inclusion of common and familiar proper names (historical, literary, geographical, etc.); Malkiel objected that this information belonged in an encyclopedia rather than a dictionary. The sentiment of the group seemed to favor Haas, so long as the number included did not become excessive.

(6) Several conferees favored the inclusion of illustrative sentences; others objected to them as (a) space-wasting, (b) often irrelevant and unhelpful. The general view was that a small number of such sentences might be worthwhile if (a) they were kept brief, (b) always had distinct value for meaning discrimination and syntax, (c) could not be adequately replaced by short phrases, and (d) always illustrated important and frequent meanings.

III. A number of interesting points came up only once, and no record of divergent or supporting opinions could be made.

(1) Martin argued against an accumulation of unhelpful glosses.

(2) Martin also noted that the dictionary should warn the student about words which should not be translated (semantic "zeros").

(3) Barnhart argued that no etymological information be included unless it had some real practical value.

(4) Both Barnhart and Haas called attention to the importance of having all technical vocabulary checked by specialists.

(5) Ianucci stressed the importance of having meaning discriminations in the source language (not the target language) and pointed out that in the foreign-native part of a dictionary such discriminations are unnecessary if the work is to be used only by native speakers.

(6) In arranging glosses (several people argued) the first one should be that which has the most general application and utility, regardless of historical primacy or the current frequency of a more specialized sense.

(7) Swanson suggested that no matter how sketchy the grammatical sketch accompanying the dictionary, it should at least include a thorough treatment of word-formation, since in this way the student can discover the probable meaning of words of regular formation which are not common enough to list in the dictionary.

(8) Harrell and Malone recommended the use of a hyphen or other similar notation to mark morpheme boundaries.

IV. In general nearly all important topics were covered more or less thoroughly during the conference. A few, such as those mentioned in part III., were mentioned without adequate discussion. Perhaps the most important point here is Ianucci's topic of meaning discrimination. What are the most economical and

most helpful ways of indicating which gloss to choose? A second point not thoroughly covered has to do with the various tricks and devices by which a dictionary can be made more useful. Several interesting ones were mentioned, such as Tietze's listing across the bottom of each page (for Turkish) all entries on other pages some of whose inflected forms might be sought on this page, and Balint's use of brackets and word order to indicate syntactic differences (transitive vs. intransitive verbs), but no exhaustive study or discussion of these was made. It was suggested that future conferences on lexicography might be wise also to include specialists in machine translation and experts on Soviet lexicographical methods.

Fred W. Householder, Principal Investigator

Sol Saporta, Assistant Investigator